



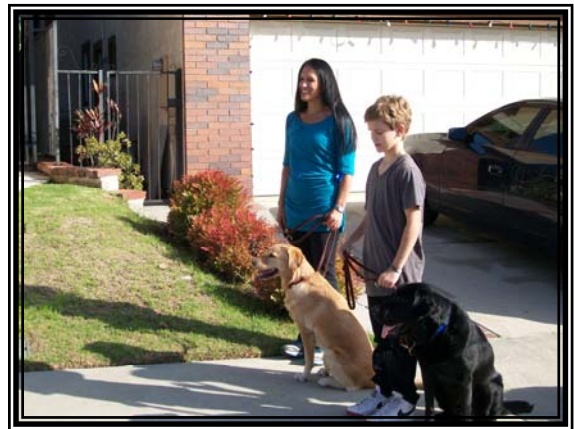
...A Diabetic's **Best** Friend!

Characteristics of a Diabetic Alert Dog by Hilary Freeman

People often ask us how we choose the dogs we train. Early Alert Canines is fortunate to have good relationships with other service dog training organizations that allow us to adopt their "Career Change" dogs. We usually receive the dog candidates as young-adults between the ages of 18 and 24 months.

These dogs have been bred for their intelligence, work ethic and temperament. Early socialization to both the canine and human world is critical for a service dog. It is important that the puppies remain with their litter for their first 8 to 12 weeks. During this first stage, puppies learn canine social interaction, play and canine body language from their mother and littermates.

However, because a service dog's bond to humans must be strong, a service dog-in-training should be placed in a human home at between 8 and 12 weeks old. The window of opportunity to create a tighter bond to humans than to other dogs closes at about 12 weeks of age. In the puppy-raiser's home, puppies begin learning the 'human world,' basic obedience and their place as members of a human pack. The 'puppy-in-training' requires consistent and almost continual human interaction.



Skilled companion teams Diana with Lucy and Skyler with Bender.

Early exposure to many different experiences is imperative to create a dog that is successfully adaptive in the active human world. A few examples of human-related experiences that an unsocialized puppy might otherwise shy away from include: umbrellas, airplanes, trains, hats, cars, public transportation, shopping malls, schools, elevators....

(Continued on page 4)

EAC In the News

Can't get enough news about Early Alert Canines? Check out this article from *Bakersfield Magazine* featuring EAC founder Carol Edwards:

<http://www.bakersfieldmagazine.net/health/kernhealth/743-fuzzy-love>

Still reading? Please don't forget to check out the EAC web page for the latest in news and events: <http://www.EarlyAlertCanines.org>

Inside this issue:

<i>Carol's Corner</i>	2
<i>Vet Notes</i>	2
<i>Client Spotlight</i>	3
<i>Meet Our Recruits</i>	5
<i>Save the Dates!</i>	5
<i>Travel with Dogs</i>	6

Carol's Corner by Carol Edwards**Carol and Kade****Notes from the desk of EAC's top dog**

2013 is looking like it will be a year of growth for EAC. Our Board of Directors is expanding and bringing with it welcomed expertise and increased enthusiasm. We are adding to our staff, enabling expansion of current and new programs.

Our client base is getting bigger--not only in number of clients but also in areas served; we now have clients in Southern California as well as Oregon. Our donor base and fundraising activities are expanding to support all this growth. This coming year we will be launching our first fundraising walk and strengthening our partnerships with family foundations that support our mission while we identify new sources of revenue.

Along with that we are ramping up our committees – Outreach, Events and Volunteers – to be able to cast a wider net. With

growth comes change and I, for one, am excited to see the changes in store for EAC in 2013!

Vet Notes by Dr. Kim BercovitzDog Health: Common Problems and Symptoms

As our working canine companions get older it is essential that we look out for some of the common health problems older dogs get. By watching for symptoms we are often able to not only improve the quality of their life, but also to extend it. The longevity of your companion depends on you.

We know that early spay/ovario-hysterectomy decreases a female dog's chance of breast cancer. If a female dog is spayed before her first heat, the chance of mammary cancer is close to zero. After the first heat I have read that the chances become close to 10% and then skyrocket to more than one in four if there is a second heat or a pregnancy. Our working companion dogs are often not spayed early. The groups in charge of their early years may be deciding if the dogs are going to breeders, or waiting to see specifically what kind of worker they are going to be. In any case, it is important to keep watching for lumps in the area of their breasts and to have them removed early if any are found.

Hypothyroidism is the most common hormone imbalance of dogs; it is often found in middle-aged and older dogs and is generally believed to be caused by the immune system destruction of the thyroid gland. Most hypothyroid dogs will have had some sort of skin abnormality. Half will have hair loss, obesity, or lethargy. About a quarter will have had skin infections. This disease is easy to treat and dogs become their old selves in a matter of weeks.

Another very common ailment in middle-aged to older dogs is excessive water consumption, excessive urination and sometimes incontinence (urine leakage). As dogs get older, we find a higher incidence of urinary tract infections (UTI) in both males and females.

Continued on page 5

Client Spotlight



Tyler, Lucas, Nathan and Oakley

When people ask someone involved with EAC why we work so hard to give highly-trained medical alert dogs away for free, almost all of us mention how touched we've been by the personal stories of the clients we serve and the impact we've seen our dogs have on their lives. In **Client Spotlight**, we ask a team member to tell you a little bit about their experience in their own words.

Mindy Anderson on Nathan and Oakley

Nathan Anderson is a sweet, active six-year-old who loves sports, drawing and beating his Dad at Monopoly. Along with his four and eight-year-old brothers, Nathan kept his parents busy even before being diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes on March 15 of 2010. Today, Nathan shares his room in Yorba Linda, California with his younger brother and Oakley, a two-year-old female black Labrador trained by Early Alert Canines as a Skilled Companion Alert Dog. In addition to playing with the boys and watching over his blood sugars when Nathan's home from school, Oakley has learned to go into Nathan's parent's bedroom in the middle of the night to alert them to impending hypoglycemic episodes. For dog-loving Nathan, having Oakley is a dream come true. For Mindy and David, having Oakley as part of their family diabetes team is nothing short of a miracle.

How has your life changed since you received your EAC dog?

Our lives have changed for the better since we received our EAC dog. We can't imagine life without Oakley (Oklahoma). We definitely spend more time testing and treating highs and lows with her amazing nose around. Nathan now has a new best friend. When Oakley came to be a part of our family, there was an instant connection between her and Nathan. He has always loved animals, especially dogs. He's the first one to get down on the floor and hang out with her, give her a pet on the head or a good scratch under the chin. For me as Nathan's mom, there is a lot of comfort knowing that she is here working for him. I like the fact that she sleeps in the same room as Nathan. My greatest fear with Nathan having Type 1 diabetes is that one day he won't wake up because he's suffered a nighttime low. Thankfully, Oakley is there to protect him.

Can you tell us about your dog's most dramatic alert?

Oakley's most dramatic save was this past summer. About a month after she came to be a part of our family, Nathan had just eaten his dinner. He got his usual insulin injection for the night and decided to go outside to jump on our trampoline. He took Oakley with him. While he jumped, she watched. After about fifteen minutes, she came to the back door looking for me. When I opened the door she rushed in and wouldn't settle down. After a sit command she did her usual alert (backing up). I treated her and then grabbed the tester and went to Nathan. Sure enough he had dropped more than 100 pts to the high 40's. I was so very thankful that she was there that day!

Continued on Page 4

CHARACTERISTICS OF A DIABETIC ALERT DOG

Continued from page 1

Dogs that are chosen to be trained as diabetic alert dogs are selected for their intelligence, scenting abilities and work ethics. Does the dog have a willingness to work and initiate the alerting action without being prompted? He or she must be intelligent and motivated enough to smell the scent produced by the diabetic's body when the blood sugar changes rapidly, and perform the desired behavior (alerting) with no verbal cuing or any other encouragement. DAD dogs must also be self-motivated to work at any time and in any surroundings, yet be able to remain quiet for hours at a time (such as sitting under a desk or attending the theater).

By playing games like hide-and-seek, the dogs reveal whether they use their eyes or nose to find food, and whether they are food motivated and thrive on praise. Diabetic alert dogs must 'seek' with their noses, since their life-saving responsibilities will be scent oriented. Another characteristic that is imperative in service dogs is their desire to please humans and interact with us in a positive way. Early Alert Canines finds dogs that want to give to and please their humans above all else.

After some initial testing of the dogs, and learning about their training and socialization histories, the trainers at EAC can then focus on the intense scent and alert training that our dogs require.

Client Spotlight (continued from page 3)

What advice would you share with someone considering getting one of these dogs?

The advice that I would share with someone considering an Early Alert dog is that it is something that you will be so glad you did for both yourself and your family. It is some work, but also so rewarding. I didn't grow up around dogs and really wasn't interested in having a dog, but now that Oakley is here she's secretly my new best friend, too. She gives nothing but unconditional love. She is the "nose" for Nathan's blood sugar drops. Life wouldn't be the same without her.

In addition to alert work what is the best thing about having your dog?

I would say the best thing about having Oakley is that she is the girl that I always wanted. She's super sweet and quiet, unlike my house full of boy energy! I like that some of the responsibility of monitoring Nathan's blood has been lifted. She scents the blood sugar drops before I even consider checking him. I love that about her. She's been nothing but a blessing. Nathan would say that the coolest thing about Oakley is that she is "his" dog (Nathan is the middle of three boys). Also, there's someone who is always ready to play ball or frisbee.



The Anderson Family

Also, there's someone who is always ready to play ball or frisbee.

Dog Health: Common Problems and Symptoms

Continued from page 2

In females sometimes the low estrogen will lead to leaking urine. Male dogs can have benign prostate hyperplasia (mostly found in un-neutered males), or more serious diseases like prostate cancer (whether they are neutered or intact). There are also more insidious causes to increased water consumption and frequent urination. It is always important to do both a urinalysis and blood work when there are abnormalities in water or urination habits. If the tests show nothing but the symptoms continue, an abdominal ultrasound should be considered.

As our companions age it is very important to periodically run blood work as well as a simple urinalysis for them. Changes or trends can tell us how they are doing internally. It is easier to treat many problems if they are found early. So pet your dogs all over checking for lumps and bumps and watch for changes in behavior, appetite, water consumption or urination.

Doing these simple things may add years to your companion's life.

**Big Bender Buddy, we love you!****Tail wags 'til next time!**

Dr. Kim Bercovitz

Meet Our Recruits

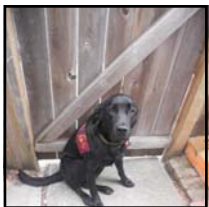
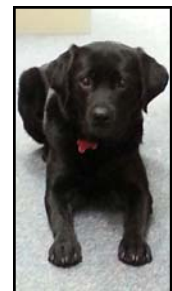
Letha is a big snuggle-bug contained in a little Labrador body. She comes to us from Guide Dogs for the Blind in San Rafael.



Yalu is a very vocal girl who makes a kind of yodeling noise when excited. She is a sweet, yellow lab/golden cross who easily wiggles her way into your heart. She came to EAC from Canine Companions for Independence (CCI).



Fleur—French for “flower,”— is an energetic, black lab/golden cross, who started her career at CCI. She is a sweet snuggle-bunny with huge, adoring brown eyes. She loves to run and initiate play with cats, kids, and other dogs.



Nolan is a tall, puppy-ish, black lab/golden cross who loves to play fetch. He also came to EAC from CCI.

**Save the
Dates!****March 23rd 2:00 PM Graduation
May18th EAC Fundraising Walk**

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Air Travel with a Service Dog By Terry O'Rourke

Air travel with a service dog is a little like traveling with a toddler, but easier. My service dog, Norm, and I have taken many flights together. This article includes some of the lessons I've learned.



First of all, allow plenty of time for all of your pre-flight activities; this minimizes stress. I like to groom Norm before we travel. That includes a bath, nail trim, and ear cleaning as well as laundering his vest, collar and bringsel. Norm gets his last drink of water and food about four hours before flight time and I reduce his food portion in half. This gives his system about two hours before his final opportunity to relieve before the flight.

I arrive at the airport terminal at least two hours before flight time. My first order of business is to check a suitcase at the luggage check-in counter. I then go to the service animal relief area. All US airports are required to and do have service animal relief areas. Almost all of the relief areas are on the street side of security; I generally locate them ahead of time by looking at the websites of the various airports. Once at the relief area, allow about ten minutes so that your dog has ample opportunity to take care of business.

Next we go the security line. To get through the metal detector doorway, I use a six-foot leash that only has metal on the dog collar end. To pass through, I put Norm in a sit-stay and walk through myself. Once I'm clear, I call Norm to walk through. Norm will be patted down for clearance. You are not required to ever

disconnect from your dog or remove his vest.

I've found that the best place to sit on the airplane is at the bulkhead divider. It gives you and your dog a little bit more room. You may qualify to early-board; check with your airline. Most fellow passenger are happy to see a service dog on board but if a conflict arises due to allergies or dog-fear, just enlist the help of a flight attendant.

Once I arrive at the destination airport, I immediately go to an animal relief area to let Norm relieve. I also offer Norm water and the other half of his previous meal. Mastering air travel with your service dog allows you keep your trusted companion at your side for all of those occasions that require long distance travel.